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**Administrator**

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**Address at the Fourth Conference of Parties**  
**United Nations Framework Convention for Climate Change**

**Buenos Aires, 11 November 1998**

Madam President,  
Excellencies,  
Distinguished Delegates,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

The recent catastrophe in Central America, which claimed over 10,000 lives and left more than 1 million homeless, has shown the world once again the disastrous consequences that can befall humanity when poverty and extreme weather conditions meet. You have all seen the grim news reports, the expressions of shock and of profound loss on the faces of so many. Beyond the tragic loss of life, years of progress and development in Central America were quickly erased. Early estimates put repair and rehabilitation costs at \$3-4 billion. On behalf of the United Nations Development Programme, I would like to express our deep solidarity with the people of Honduras, Nicaragua, Guatemala and El Salvador.

Whatever the cause of Hurricane Mitch, extreme weather events are predicted by many to be one consequence of global warming, the challenge now before us. We have already come a long way. The Kyoto Protocol includes the commitments for Annex I countries to reduce their greenhouse gas emissions. I urge all Parties to ratify this landmark agreement. There are no sound reasons for costly delays.

At a press briefing yesterday, UNDP and the World Resources Institute released a report documenting how developing countries are already participating meaningfully in reducing climate altering emissions. The initiatives we have reported – in China, India, Brazil and elsewhere – are only the beginning, but they are certainly meaningful. China, for example, has sharply reduced coal subsidies and improved energy efficiency. Without these and other measures, its emissions of carbon dioxide would be 50 per cent higher than they are today.

It will take some 100 years before the cumulative carbon dioxide emissions from developing countries equal those of industrialized countries. Yet changes in the earth's climate will hit developing countries first -- and hardest. We have already seen, with natural phenomena such as hurricanes, typhoons and El Nino, the vulnerability of development to climate events. Generations of poverty, and deforestation for fuel and farming have left many areas barren and more vulnerable to the destructive forces of floods and mudslides.

The poor have a right to development; it is a fundamental human right to be free of poverty. Some two billion people still cook with traditional fuels. More than 1.5 billion people do not have electricity. Precious time is expended in poor communities to gather firewood. Developing countries in general, and the poor in particular, urgently need modern energy services. As long as poor communities lack access to these services, development will suffer, and poverty will be perpetuated.

Yet, we need not always work through conventional approaches that replicate unsustainable energy patterns. As the world community agreed at Rio, climate change objectives and poverty eradication can and must be reconciled. In the years since Rio, much

has been accomplished in the promotion of new and different approaches to energy. Commercially viable and environmentally sound technologies are becoming increasingly available. Opportunities lie primarily in more efficient use of energy, enhanced use of renewable energy sources, introduction of new and better performing technologies and improved land use and forestry practices. We must work together to promote these opportunities in order to fulfill our sustainable development and climate change mitigation objectives simultaneously.

Industrialized countries, responsible for the bulk of greenhouse gas emissions, have recognized that it is in everyone's interest that they assist developing countries in the implementation of sustainable energy strategies. The problem is that the promises of greater assistance made at Rio and elsewhere are not being fulfilled. Development finance, sound technology choices, technology transfer, environmentally-conscious pricing and trade policies, technical assistance and new partnerships with the private sector are all needed. And no mechanisms under the Kyoto Protocol can substitute for the need for an urgent reversal of recent declines in Official Development Assistance.

We at UNDP have stressed the close links that exist between poverty eradication and environmental sustainability. The ninth meeting of the Commission on Sustainable Development will provide a major opportunity to review the necessary changes needed in the global energy system in order to support development that is pro-poor and pro-environment. In our work, we are reaching out to the private sector and to our partners in the United Nations system. UNDP has initiated, together with the United Nations Department of Social and Economic Affairs and the World Energy Council, a "World Energy Assessment" to provide a substantive input for the preparatory process for the Ninth CSD.

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We at UNDP are determined to support developing country efforts to combine implementation of the Climate Convention with poverty eradication and sustainable human development goals. UNDP's publication "Energy After Rio: Prospects and Challenges" identifies a number of opportunities to develop energy systems that indeed support social, economic and environmental objectives.

With the GEF, UNDP supports the efforts of over 100 developing countries to prepare their initial national communications under the Convention. And we have mobilized donor support to provide additional technical assistance to respond to the immediate needs of developing countries to implement the Convention.

UNDP has a GEF portfolio of about \$225 million in the area of climate change. These projects are now integral of UNDP program activities. They have leveraged more than \$200 million of co-financing. An increasing number of countries are now including sustainable energy and forestry management among their national priorities for UNDP support.

Additionally, the FINESSE programme, which UNDP operates in partnership with the World Bank and bilateral donors, brings sustainable energy systems to small-scale users.

After modalities for the implementation of the Clean Development Mechanism are agreed upon, it will contribute significantly to reaching the dual goals of lowering greenhouse gas emissions and promoting sustainable development. The design of the Clean Development Mechanism is critical to its success. As a contribution to this important objective, UNDP released a publication here last week that examines key issues and options pertaining to its design and development. UNDP will also help address key components necessary to its success, such as adequate capacity-building, technology transfer and project identification. Properly defined, we believe that the CDM offers tremendous new potential.

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Climate change will affect the long term development prospects and security of all nations, rich and poor. Working together through international instruments such as the Convention, we can help ensure that the aspirations of all countries for continued growth and for poverty eradication are enhanced, not limited, by our growing concerns for the environment. As many in the private sector have realized, responding to the climate change challenge can also provide important impetuses for growth, can create new jobs and new industries, and can enhance competitiveness. We have the ingredients before us to turn an ominous environmental challenge into a win-win situation. What we need is sufficient resolve and political will together with a sense of urgency. The costs of failure are high, and the stakes for future generations could not be higher.

The recent financial crisis has shown the importance of political leadership in addressing major global challenges together. Yet the long term stakes here are even higher, and the importance of far-sighted leadership even more important.

Thank you.